

**REMARKS:**

At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-20 were pending. Claims 1-20 stand rejected. Pursuant to this Amendment, claims 1, 5-7 and 11 have been amended; claims 2-4 and 20 have been cancelled; and new claim 21 has been added. Claims 1, 5-19 and 21 remain pending in the subject application.

Claims 1-3 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sano et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,167,779). Claims 1, 2 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,895,081). Claims 3-5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14-16, 18 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanimoto et al. in view of Sano et al. Claims 6, 8 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanimoto et al. in view of Sano et al., and further in view of Miyagawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,794,994). Claim 13 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanimoto et al. in view of Sano et al., and further in view of Tanimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,129,694). These rejections are traversed for at least the following reasons.

Without agreeing with the Examiner as to what is or is not taught by the art of record, the applicants have made changes to the claims of the subject application to more clearly define what it is they regard as their invention. More specifically, claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of now cancelled claims 2-4, thereby making the previous rejections of claim 1 moot. Claim 11 has also been amended to include similar limitations previously found in claims 2-4. Unlike the present invention which provides that the same projection on the partition wall receives both the latch handle aperture and the lock lever aperture, Tanimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,895,081) teaches that the through hole 312a of the handle 3 receives the projection 22a of the wall 22, and the through hole 411a of the knob 4 receives a different, spaced apart projection 22b of the wall 22 (see, e.g., Figs. 3 and 5 of Tanimoto et al.). There is no teaching or suggestion in the art of record that would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to modify Tanimoto et al. in the manner as set forth in claims 1 and 11 of the subject application. In

fact, taking into account the structure of the door handle of Tanimoto et al., if one attempted to modify the device disclosed therein in accordance with the teachings of the presently claimed invention, the door handle of Tanimoto et al. would be inoperable or not function in the manner as originally intended. Accordingly, any such proposed modification to Tanimoto et al. would be improper. Thus, for at least the foregoing reasons, claims 1 and 11 are patentable over the art of record. Claims 5-10 and 12-19 depend from one of claims 1 and 11, and, therefore, are allowable for at least the same reasons applied thereto as well as for the additional subject matter recited in each.

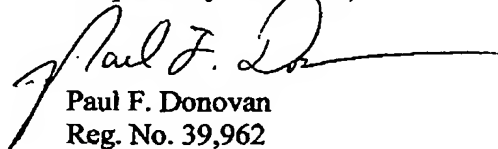
Claim 20 has been cancelled and rewritten into claim 21 with additional limitations. In particular, claim 21 recites that the housing is provided with only three mounting members, whereas the prior art teaches four mounting members. The three mounting members are also claimed as being coaxially arranged to further distinguish the prior art. It is believed that claim 21 is allowable over the art of record.

No new matter has been added by way of the amendments and remarks made herein.

Reconsideration and allowance of all the pending claims is respectfully requested. In the event that there are any remaining issues that can be addressed and dealt with expeditiously by telephone conference, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number indicated below.

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Respectfully submitted,

  
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